

May 31, 2007

Dear FCC,

I am writing to express a serious concern around the issue of “net neutrality.” While I understand and support a competitive, capitalistic economy, “net neutrality” is a national security issue and should not be captive to corporate interests.

The internet was originally the DARPA net. Developed for the Defense Department, the primary goal was to enable communications which could not be interrupted. This was accomplished by making a network which, by its very design, enabled free transmission of information. If blocked in one direction, information would flow around the blockage and still reach its intended destination. In the early days of the DARPA net and the internet it was possible to draw maps showing the nodes that made such unshakable communications possible. Today such a map would likely be a solid mass of such nodes stretching across the country and, increasingly, around the world.

I worked at Digital Equipment Corporation from 1969 to 1981 and watched the early internet evolve to a valuable government, corporate and university communications tool. In more recent years, with the world wide web graphic interface, the internet has become a consumer staple. It is this consumer nature of the internet that lies behind corporate attempts to derive additional revenues from creating a tiered access structure or actually blocking free internet access as has been threatened by AT&T and others.

Please be very cautious about enabling corporate interests to control the internet. In times of calamity the free access to the internet has already saved lives, on an individual level and by providing international visibility to disasters and persecution. Corporate blocking of internet access or delaying of private emails or internet access could result in loss of life, property damage, and worse. The internet was originally the tool of the Defense Department to insure their communications. We have seen, throughout the United States, problems caused by police and fire departments often being on non-interfacing communications systems. If we do not keep the internet as a self-healing, non-interruptible network, we risk a disaster at some point. Yes, the corporations will say they’re sorry, they will be apologetic and regret the problems caused by their system controls, but maybe Miami will be destroyed, or Houston, or New York. Or that and much more. This is a real possibility.

We need the immediacy and redundancy of the free internet. Please, for the sake of our country's security, do not allow "net neutrality" to be an issue that puts us on a slippery slope to personal and national high risk.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Mary Cole
Norwell, Massachusetts